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Early election planning page 2 **Snaffle and Mane** page 13 **Peer support** page 14

She shoots, she scores
The Haliburton Red Hawks Girls' hockey team hit the ice this past week to host a local tournament from visiting schools. For more photos, see inside this edition. /ADAM FRISK staff

HE Council sets timeline for STR review

ADAM FRISK
Journalist

Highlands East Council has approved an intensive public consultation process for its Short-Term Rental (STR) licensing bylaw, with a series of public engagement sessions scheduled for next month.

During the Feb. 10 regular council meeting, elected officials pushed for a "hybrid" approach to gathering feedback, rejecting a slow, linear process in favour of doing "more than one thing at a time."

"We already know that there are groups of people who are really, they're trying to work with our bylaw. They're trying to make it work for them, for us," Deputy Mayor Cecil Ryall said. "They recognize the reasons why we put the bylaw in place in the first place. But at the same time, they're being frustrated by the fact that there's not really a whole lot happening with it at the moment."

Ryall argued that based on information already collected by township staff, "there's no reason in the world" why council can't entertain written submissions and a public meeting on the STR

see STR LICENSING page 12

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County council hosts last meeting at 11 Newcastle

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

It's official, the Feb. 11 regular meeting of County Council was the last official meeting in the current council chambers, located at 11 Newcastle Street in Minden.

"We're getting into the next phase of the development, where they're going to start working on this building," said County CAO Gary Dyke, "starting with the top floor."

Late last year, County Council approved a recommendation from staff to renovate the Land Registration offices, located at 12 Newcastle Street, to accommodate additional offices and council meeting space. With the current location, council faces accessibility issues, and the utilized space within 11 Newcastle has reached capacity, according to staff.

At the time, the recommendation was met with conflict from a number of County Councillors, who questioned the price tag of $1.3 million to develop new office space. After much debate, the initiative was pushed through, and developments are underway at both sites.

"This will be the last council meeting held in this room," said Dyke during the Feb. 11 meeting, "We're looking to be back in the new facility for our April 22 meeting. Hopefully it will be done the first or second week of April."

Dyke noted that the original proposal for construction presented a lengthy renovation time for both sites, but staff have found efficiencies to streamline the process, bumping up the finish date by two months, finishing completely by September of this year, rather than December.

Council meetings scheduled between now and April will be held virtually. "However, if council would wish to have one in person, that would come at the discretion of the Warden," added Dyke, "and we can make arrangements."

Councillor Walt McKechnie, the deputy mayor for Dysart, noted that he has received questions around the renovations, and inquired whether costs and timelines are aligned with the original proposal.

"It's my understanding that we are actually a little ahead of schedule," answered Dyke. "And we are currently in line with budget … the answer is yes to both of your questions."

Dyke added that reports on the progress - both financial on the physician construction side of it - will be coming to council shortly, to provide members with a detailed update on the developments.

The report from Dyke was received as information. County Council currently meets every second and fourth Wednesday of the month, and all sessions can be viewed online through YouTube.

The council chambers at 11 Newcastle Street in Minden will not be hosting in-person sessions moving forward. Meetings will be held online until the new chambers are available in the spring. /FILE

AMO ready for the next generation

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

With municipal elections officially on the roster for fall of this year, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is putting their best foot forward in an effort to recruit some fresh candidates.

It's no secret that interest in local politics seems to be waning. During the last municipal election, voter turnout was at an all-time low, with only 36 per cent of eligible voters showing up to the polls.

But perhaps the lack of interest in voting came from minimal options presented on the ballot. In 2014 there were 390 acclamations in Ontario, followed by 477 in 2018, and finally, 553 in 2022. "We're trending in all the wrong ways in all these categories," said Christa Lowry, the mayor for the Municipality of Mississippi Mills, and the chair for the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA). "By almost every measure, local democracy isn't where it needs to be for us to be healthy."

With the discouraging numbers presented in the last election, the board of directors for AMO knew something needed to change. "There was a commitment from AMO's reserves to invest one million dollars over the next four years," explained Lowry. She noted that there were three priorities identified: to address the lack of representation, to increase voter turnout, and lastly, to encourage greater civic engagement.

"We wanted to demystify what municipal government does," she said. "Healthy democracy really starts when we realize we need to have everyone's voices heard."

One of the major gaps identified by AMO was the voice of youth. To combat that absence, they have launched a series of workshops dedicated to youth considering running for municipal office. The intention is to discuss what to expect running as a candidate and as a young person, critical strategies for successfully campaigning for municipal office, understanding what it takes to become a candidate, and strategies for engagement, including communication.

Running these sessions are three young professionals who are active in the political scene. Natasha Salonen was elected the first female Mayor of Wilmot Township in October 2022 and, at 27, became the youngest female mayor in Ontario's history. She also sits on the Waterloo Regional Council, and contributes to the Heritage Planning and Active Transportation Advisory Committees.

Natasha Salonen, Aidan Kallioinen, and Cameron Wales will be the presenting speakers at the upcoming workshops dedicated to youth interested in municipal government. All three individuals are well versed and highly experienced in their respective fields. /submitted

> ***"Healthy democracy really starts when we realize we need to have everyone's voices heard ..."***
>
> – Christa Lowry, Rural Ontario Municipal Association Chair

The second speaker is Aidan Kallioinen, who is currently a first-term councillor from the Town of Espanola in Northeastern Ontario. Kallioinen was first elected at the age of 18, making him one of Ontario's youngest elected officials. While he is currently studying journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa, and commuting back and forth to maintain his work in elected office, he got his start in politics by volunteering at the food bank, minor sports, and as a member of the Espanola Lions Club and Espanola Elks Club.

Lastly, AMO will be featuring Cameron Wales, who was first elected to Brockville City Council in 2018 at age 23, and re-elected in 2022. Wales was the chair of the planning and operations committee, and the governance committee, and represented his region on the ROMA board of directors.

Lowry is optimistic about the initiative to engage youth, and is already seeing success in the form of registrations rolling in for the online workshops, scheduled for Feb. 18, March 11, and April 15. All sessions are entirely free, and can be accessed by visiting www.amo.on.ca.

"Time brings experience and wisdom," said Lowry, "but fresh eyes bring a different experience, and it's valuable to have a variety of experience sitting at the table. The health of our democracy is dependent on that."

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Talking politics with Dave Meslin

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Sometimes, you have to start from the ground up in order to make a change.

With a municipal election slotted for this year, the Telling Our Stories Speakers Series, in cooperation with the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project and with the support of Places for People, has planned a "pop-up" presentation in advance of this year's municipal election.

> ***"This is a really important year to focus on what's happening locally ... what are the different ways we can make it better?"***
>
> – Author Dave Meslin

The presenting speaker will be Dave Meslin, author of *Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy from The Ground Up*.

Meslin brings 30 years of civic engagement to the table, with experience in both urban and rural settings. In his book, the author dives into what is needed to nurture a healthy democracy, and ensure everyone's voices are heard. In 2024, Meslin hosted *Unrigged*, a six-episode TVO documentary series based on his book, which highlighted strategies and initiatives in all levels of governance to ensure tangible progress.

His TED talk about apathy has more than two million views, and his 90-second video clip from the 2015 Canadian election coverage, using colourful stacks of Lego bricks to explain how our voting system fails us, has over 2.5 million views on Facebook alone.

"This is a really important year to focus on what's happening locally," said Meslin during a recent interview. "What are the different ways we can make it better?"

Between voter turnout and acclamations to positions of power, Meslin noted that those are the two major factors in recognizing if a community is present in their voting process. "With the turnout so low, it's a sign that people don't really know what's happening," he said.

But Meslin stands by the fact that municipal legislation is one of the most important forms of governance. He noted that if the Federal Government stopped working, it would take Canadians days, maybe weeks to notice. If the Provincial Government pushed pause, constituents would notice within a few weeks. "But if the municipality stopped working, you would notice right away," he said.

"There's been so much downloaded to municipalities," Meslin added, noting social services, daycares, policing, libraries, and land use planning are some of the many factors discussed at municipal round tables.

When asked about the potentially muddied waters of a two-tiered system, with local government sitting at both a township and a county level, Meslin was optimistic that it shouldn't confuse voters during the elections process. "We only vote for one level," he clarified, noting that it's the mayors and deputy mayors that then represent each municipality at the county level. No additional votes necessary, but a good reminder to constituents that their vote plays a role at multiple levels of jurisdiction.

Meslin noted that a major difference between individuals running for municipal office is the lack of party alliances. During elections at provincial and federal levels, the parties often decide on the representatives, and all party members are aligned on specific platforms.

At a municipal level, those lines are blurred. "You don't have parties at a local level," said Meslin, "and that changes everything." Individuals are not running on aligned campaigns, rather, they are passionate about projects and initiatives within the communities they are serving. "I think there are institutional barriers," said Meslin. "It's not that they are apathetic, people just may not know how to do it."

/submitted

Meslin was eager to encourage anyone with an interest in learning more about running for government to get involved. "Not in May when the applications open, not in October when the election is happening, but right now," he said. "You have to start this now."

The author and political advocate will be speaking at the Haliburton Fish Hatchery on Feb. 25 at 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at www.tellingourstories.company.site or by calling 705-457-7557.

Harcourt fire

Kingdon Timber Mart on Chester Crescent in Harcourt caught fire on the evening of Feb. 12. Multiple fire departments were deployed to manage the blaze, which was noted to be under control later in the evening. Marketing manager for the location, Alex Banelopoulous noted that while they are waiting on more details such as cause of fire and timing, operations will be continuing through the Gooderham location. She shared that the townships were working diligently to deliver sand and salt to prevent the water from freezing, and the only injury was a firefighter who slipped and broke his arm on the ice. With firefighters working together, the lumber yard was saved from the flames, but the retail building has been destroyed. This is a developing story, and more information will be shared in the coming days as it becomes available. /photo from Facebook, cutline by Emily Stonehouse

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A piece of the past with the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Some may say that items hold memories. Tales of the past and experiences gone by.

That's something that Robert Wong, the cultural program coordinator for the Minden Hills Cultural Centre (MHCC), firmly believes.

"There are a lot of studies about how history and culture can be therapeutic," said Wong during a recent interview. "How can you make nostalgia an educational opportunity?"

Wong has been with the MHCC since spring of 2023, when he was in the midst of his Masters in Museum Education.

But prior to his move to Minden, he completed an internship at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, where he was tasked with sorting duplicate artifacts into themes and collections. He ended up creating boxes that were then used for educational purposes, around the history and background of the area. "It could be personal items, hobbies/recreation/leisure activities, and research on their history and context to come up with points that can spark conversations," said Wong.

Upon starting with the MHCC, Wong brought that idea to life locally with the creation of reminiscence kits. Originally formulated as an extension of his master's program, Wong connected with the long term care unit of Haliburton Highlands Health Services, to offer programming for aging seniors. "Here at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre, I observed that in the winter months, our museum and village are closed, and residents in Haliburton County just don't have access to heritage and culture as much as they do during the summer season," said Wong. "Bringing museum objects to them becomes an obvious option. When we think about accessibility, we often focus on improving access to our buildings, rather than bringing heritage and culture closer to the people themselves."

He was seeking the opportunity to observe cognitive patterns presented by the seniors when they were reconnected with an item of the past. "I am always looking for results," said Wong, "and that drives me to engage with the participants more, to ask questions that are a little more stimulating."

One of the first reminiscence kits Wong brought to a long term care home was from a recent donation of vintage cooking ware. When creating the kits, the cultural coordinator focuses on all five senses; offering opportunities for smell, touch, and sight. "I want to make sure all the senses are fulfilled," he noted. "That's how you link memories, with those senses."

During a recent session, Wong provided an empty tobacco case, and allowed residents to reconnect with the distinct smell and flavour of the set. While many of the participants are experiencing dementia, Wong shared that it's amazing to see how many memories come flooding back when offering a piece of the past.

The last session was held just before Valentine's Day, with an Edwardian wedding dress, a shaving kit, and a series of postcards from the 1940s and 50s. "The residents were really active with this one," said Wong, "They were all engaged in conversation, talking a lot. I wasn't even using my own questions, they were all naturally just engaged."

A glimpse into the recent Valentine's edition of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre's reminiscence kits held in the Minden long term care home. The idea is to see if any pieces of the past can bring back memories from seniors who may have different experiences with the items. /photos submitted

And while the memories floating to the surface may be a warm welcome for many residents, Wong noted that his work at the museum also benefits from the first-hand experiences many are able to provide. "We had one woman share stories about her wedding on a lake, north of Minden," he recalled. "Right in that session, she was able to bring back that memory."

Wong noted that while he has access to photos and artifacts, the real-life stories of locals offer a glimpse into the past that is only available through first-hand accounts, allowing him to connect the dots of days gone by.

There will be other sessions planned for the spring months, including an Easter reminiscence kit, as well as one heading into the summer months. Wong is currently seeking grants to offer the program beyond HHHS, in an effort to welcome more public viewers to the process.

Right, Valentine's cards pulled from the collection of artifacts at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre were used to bring back memories, or allow residents of long term care homes to reconnect with pieces of their past. /submitted

Peer support specialist joins Youth Wellness Hub team

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

A new 2SLGBTQ+ peer support specialist has started at the Haliburton Youth Wellness Hub.

Carl Vossen, a graduate of Trent University's social work program has over five years of experience supporting marginalized youth in Ontario.

Driving two days a week from Peterborough, Vossen will be available to youth that need one-on-one support. Outside of individual sessions, Vossen will provide one-on-one peer support, resources to families, plan activities related to connecting with identity, conduct outreach at the high school, foster community, and offer relationship support.

New to Haliburton, Vossen has been settling in well.

"I think it is really beautiful," they said. "Even noticing Pride flags outside of local businesses, it's really heartening to see that pride and representation out and about in a small town. I know it can feel really isolating and lonely as a queer person in rural areas."

A cat parent, collage artist, avid reader, and VHS tape collector, Vossen says they were drawn to peer support due to its flexibility in supporting mental health and their personal drive to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth in rural communities.

"My number one goal is to increase opportunities for connection for 2SLGBTQS+ youth in Haliburton County," said Vossen. "To help youth feel less alone and to understand that their world can expand beyond their experience of the here and now."

Vossen says that in their position, they hope to be the person that they needed while growing up trans in a rural community. A space like the Youth Wellness Hub would have been life changing for them.

A new position to the Youth Wellness Hub, the peer support program is going to be built from scratch. As the work continues, Vossen will ask the youth what they are needing from the support specialist position.

"I can't do this work without youth input," said Vossen "I can't offer relevant services if I'm not in tune with the needs of the community."

With five years of experience in peer support, Vossen is no stranger to trailblazing their own 2SLGBTQ+ peer outreach program, improvising access for trans youth to receive gender affirming care, and improving quality of service in rural communities.

"It feels like this role was meant for me," said Vossen. "It is directly in line for what I am meant to be doing and I can make a difference here."

Mary Sisson, manager of the Haliburton Youth Wellness Hub says that the youth that visit the hub have been expressing the need for 2SLGBTQ+ in-person peer support for quite some time.

"It feels like home," said Vossen.

Currently, the Wellness Hub has Lindsay Meller, a nurse practitioner capable of offering gender affirming care, and Cicily Cooper, a new addition to the Haliburton Highlands Family Health , who is a practitioner that is committed to offering gender affirming care to the community.

Youth that grow up trans and gender nonforming in rural communities need to seek care in large urban areas. This involved several hurdles for youth including transportation, leaving their home support community, and long time expenditures. Rural doctors often are not aware of the resources or understand what is involved with

see INCLUSIVITY page 14

Huskies in new hands

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

It's the dawn of a new day for the Haliburton County Huskies, as longtime owner and founding figure Paul Wilson hands over the reins to head coach of the team, Ryan Ramsay.

"I'm still actively involved," said Wilson during a recent interview, "but I'm getting older. I need an exit plan."

The team came to the area five years ago, and has taken the region by storm with merchandise, community events, and sold-out games. The Ontario Junior Hockey League team is currently holding the fifth position in the East Conference, trailing by just a few points from the top three teams. With the playoffs looking promising for next month, Wilson feels as though he's done his time in putting the team on the map.

"Several months ago, I did make the public announcement that I was looking to sell the team if the right person came along," confirmed Wilson, and noted that two interested parties came forward. The only issue: they would have taken the Huskies out of Haliburton.

"The price wasn't the issue," he said. "It's that they wanted to move the team, so I basically broke off negotiations with both those groups. My main objective is to keep the team here."

Wilson has poured his heart, soul, and wallet into keeping the team afloat locally. He secures all sponsors, ads, game day banners, programs, season's tickets, and stocks the bars on game days, to name a few items. He has also doled out $150,000 on the team's locker room at S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena, and $20,000 installing drink rails in the rink. It's a passion project for him, but one that is starting to take its toll.

A recent game the Huskies hosted on home ice. The team is currently holding the fifth position in the Eastern Conference. /TIM YANO staff

"This is my fifth year at this," he said, "and we've lost money every year."

This is where Ryan Ramsay comes into the picture. Ramsay is the head coach and general manager of the Haliburton County Huskies, and has been working as the development coach for the Peterborough Petes this season. He has decades of experience in professional hockey, and has worked with players through all ages and stages of their careers.

In 2021, Ramsay moved with his family to the area permanently, to focus on growing the team here in Haliburton. And as of next season, he will be stepping into the role of owner for the Huskies. "I am confident that between Ryan and I," said Wilson, "we can make this work. I'm confident that we can make the business at least break even. That's the difference now: it's Ryan's team now."

Wilson credits the support of local businesses for the success of the team settling into the area. "We get a lot of money from the community, sponsorship wise," he said, noting 13 to 14 major sponsors who are committed to the team, year over year. Wilson also has a seven-year agreement in place with the Township of Minden Hills, securing their time slot for practices, and subsidizing some costs for rentals. While that agreement is heading into its last year, he is confident that they will be able to secure further support from the township as the team looks ahead.

"I don't want to just bail," said Wilson, reflecting on his role with the organization. "I want to make this transition work, and turn more over to other people."

With interest in the team at what Wilson refers to as "an all-time high," he is hopeful about the team sticking to its roots in the Haliburton Highlands. He noted a number of sold-out games, with options to view the games online as well. "We're thankful for the support following everything," said Wilson. "It's as good as it's ever been."

The transition of ownership from Wilson to Ramsay will be finalized by the 2026-2027 season. The last regular game for the Haliburton Huskies this season is Feb. 28, with playoffs kicking off shortly after.

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Fresh

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

IT'S FINALLY happening. We are officially in a municipal election year here in the Haliburton Highlands.

Some may say it's been a long time coming, but it's amazing how fast four years can fly by.

With our last election in 2022, there's been a number of highs and lows, ups and downs over the seasons.

Our elected officials have been thrown a major ice storm, unprecedented weather patterns, multiple elections in varying positions of power outside our own corners, changing legislation, and a whole lot of deer in town.

And their terms aren't over yet.

But that doesn't mean we can't look ahead.

I've been impressed with the amount of buzz around this election already, with a particular interest in wrangling young professionals into the ring. It's an ever-changing world, and the folks that seem to keep up with that pace tend to have fewer rings around the tree trunk.

That's not to say that the many representatives who have dedicated years to their positions haven't made an impact. This community is what it is based on the people who have poured their lives into it. For better or for worse.

But we are well overdue for some fresh faces at the party.

And while that may seem like a necessary step in implementing something that resembles actual change into the cobwebby corners of our communities, it comes with a flash of obstacles in the path.

It's no secret that these municipal positions pay next to nothing. And while it's marketed as a part-time gig, we all know it's not a job, it's a lifestyle. Gone are the days of anonymity in the grocery store, or blissful unawareness around the tendering processes.

That makes it tricky for young people to get their foot in the door. We still have mortgages, student debt, and savings for our kids in an effort for them to ease into the loan system more smoothly than our generation.

And speaking of kids, we are in an era where their little lives have been put on the forefront. And rightfully so. There is significantly increased presence from both moms and dads, and on the flip side, a waitlist for childcare that spans years.

And trust me, kids and council chambers don't always mix.

So maybe we change the mindset of what our expectations are for our elected officials if we want to see these fresh faces. Provide a wage that at least scrapes the surface of the cost of living, recognize that day-time meetings and ongoing time in the spotlight could be detrimental to both working adults and parents, and create opportunities where equity is sought and prioritized, rather than pushed aside with the words; 'this is how it's always been done.'

Because it's time for a change. It's time to get involved. It's time to allow a space for different voices to come together, representing different needs, different interests, and different experiences. It's time to work towards the future while appreciating the past, mapping out a little corner of the world where our kids should be proud to grow up.

So now's the time to make a difference, and welcome some fresh faces to the table.

Maiden, mother, crone redux

Pair, Ponder

Poke, Peel

fay martin

WE, AS a species that hopes to continue to exist, require women to become mothers. But it seems we have always made that difficult.

Rebecca Mead, in *'How Should a Mother Be?'* (*New Yorker*, Jan 26/26) reviews a history of the 'external factors in the culture [that] make being a good mother a timeless imperative – one that's endlessly demanded yet impossible to achieve'. The factors change – from the probability of death in childbirth until not so long ago, to the impossibility of excelling in the 'intensive, intentional parenting' currently required while building and sustaining a stellar career, all in the absence of adequate public childcare.

No wonder young women who have a choice (which in theory but not in reality they all do) are opting out of motherhood.

In fact, every stage of being a woman is made impossibly difficult by societal expectations. It's almost as if keeping women down is necessary for lifting men up. (And I understand, as much as I can as a woman, the genesis of that feeling, because in most persevering species, the role of the male is unapologetically minute and momentary. Still, one hopes for a more evolved perspective.)

Let us briefly review how the bar for females doing life right at every stage is structurally challenging.

Maiden: One must be attractive but not a temptress. One must be intelligent and competent but not supplant males. One must be emotionally supportive but not create dependency.

Mother: One must be 'good enough' but the expectation is endlessly mutable and malleable, defined by race and ethnicity, differentially accessible by class.

Choosing not to be, or being unable to be, a mother is potentially a crime on its own merit. I recall a client, in tears, saying her culture called her a 'mule' because she was barren. We recall the wives of Henry VIII being dispatched because they did not produce a male heir, whereas it was the quality of Henry's sperm that explained the problem.

Pregnancy can render a woman a fragile porcelain creature who must be protected from living her life, a depersonalized baby-making machine, and everything in between.

(For example, my doctoral research respondents, kids who became legally 'independent' when they aged out of the child welfare system at 18, talked a lot about parenting. The girls reported that pregnancy gave them otherwise unavailable status and resources - and intensified surveillance, proof that they were being cared for so that their baby, which was likely to be apprehended at birth, could get 'a good start in life'. The boys were chastised for not 'keeping their pecker in their pants' and threatened with having to reimburse the state for supporting the mother of their child.)

Mead, in her article, references Pliny of ancient Rome, where the (male-authored) literature describes the expertise of midwifery as unlimited power, which was meant as a warning, not a complement. I see scary parallels with the modern medicalization of childbirth, where it seemed a good idea for women wracked by contractions to lie prone with her feet in stirrups, vagina at easy eye-height for the attending physician, scalpel in hand to perform a preventive episiotomy so that the stitching up of vaginal tears could be neat 'embroidery' (an ob-gyn actually said that to me!).

Okay, so procreation is inevitably gendered, and as such, a hotbed for politics. Surely menopause offers relief from the wars?

Crone: I accomplished (ha!) menopause fairly early and easily and thereafter took evil pleasure in horrifying women friends by quantifying the amount of time that returned to a woman's life when she no longer has to worry about menstruation: the several days per month of actually bleeding, the days leading up to and out of that time, the hours worrying about having or not having a period, the cost of the paraphernalia. (I didn't even know about the pink tax then.)

Just recently I learned that many young women are choosing birth control that eliminates menstruation, and part of me says, good for them, beating crone-dom to the punch. But another part of me grieves this distancing from the body, this addition of yet another decision over-riding nature. When should one want menopause to take place? What if the answer is never? HRT to the grave? No wonder there's such a whoopla about menopause at the moment – it just became another stage of life for women to do 'it' right!

What I wanted to say about crone-dom is that I think it has become, potentially, a reiteration of motherhood. The expectation that, if you're still relatively hale and hearty, you subsidize the un-achievable expectations of modern parenting by active grand-parenting, and/or in your spare time, subsidize the inadequacies of the health system to manage elders whose care needs are sadly neglected. Next column, readers.

points of view

Hop dogs

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

WINTER IS NOT the easiest time for a dog. It's not that they don't enjoy the snow and cooler temperatures. Or even collecting snowballs in their coat. Because, if my dog is any indication, they really do.

No, the problem with winter for dogs is that eventually they don't run on all cylinders. For those unversed in the mechanics of our canine friends, permit me to explain.

The typical dog runs on four cylinders, also known as legs.

There will be a time in winter – generally when temperatures plummet – when your dog will lose the use of at least one cylinder.

This happened to my pup Rosie this morning. As a result, despite her protests, I had to end our walk early so that the problem didn't get worse.

This kind of thing is old hat to experienced dog owners, but it occurs to me that recognizing the symptoms might not be so obvious for new dog owners. That's why I am going to explain the telltale signs that will let you know your dog is experiencing these issues.

Let's begin with the most common one.

If your dog is walking on two hind legs and one forward leg, it is easy to assume your dog is perpetually on point. When this occurs, you need to ask yourself: Is my dog a pointer? If not, it has very likely blown a front cylinder. If your pup is a pointing dog, however, it is probably experiencing brain freeze – which is also reason to get it back to the warmth of your house.

Rear leg issues are a little more complicated, unless you have a male dog. In that case, you'll know it blew a rear cylinder when he tried to lift the other leg to pee.

No matter which foot is out of commission, your dog is going to give you a look that says, "We don't have to go back. I am still working with 50 per cent more legs than you."

This is a compelling argument.

Things get a little iffier when your dog is walking on two legs though. For instance, if both legs are on one side, they will be walking in circles. Otherwise, they will be hopping like Pepe LePew – which, in this Me-Too era, is not a good look.

The real danger is when both front paws are out of commission. That's because your immediate thought – and you can't be blamed for this – is that you are witnessing a historic stage in canine evolution when they finally become bipedal. This is not the case. Trust me.

Lastly, when a dog is reduced to hopping on one leg, there's generally no question what you are looking at, unless your dog acts like a pogo stick to begin with. The only question, in fact, is how you got to be so oblivious as to let it get this far.

Sure, there's a good argument to be made for the viral social media potential of such an occurrence. Again, however, it's best to get your dog inside quickly.

My point is most dogs would prefer if you let their walk continue right until they have no more feet left to use. At that point, they will concede defeat and give you a sad look that indicates they actually want to end the walk. Of course, it's best never to let it get that far. Because, honestly, after that, the walk becomes a total drag.

pic *of the* past

Haliburton looked much different in 1960. In this photo by Bob and Cathy Haskill of Mississauga, you can see Head Lake Park as a sawmill; the train station; the old arena and GM dealership on Highland Street. /FILE

Walk for Peace

Tales from the great Green meadow

Lynda Shadbolt

"WE DON'T HAVE to be loud to be heard." In a world filled with noise - loud headlines, clashing opinions, and constant digital noise - this simple truth feels almost radical. Yet for 108 days, nineteen venerable monks demonstrated its power in the most humble way possible: by walking.

They walked for more than 2,300 miles from Fort Worth, Texas to Washington, D.C., covering 20 to 30 miles each day. Beside them was their faithful dog, Aloka. There were no protest signs, no chants, no demands for attention. Their pilgrimage was quiet, steady, and intentional. With every step, they spread peace - not through force or volume, but through presence.

Their walk was a living reminder that "peace is not imposed by power, but cultivated through mindfulness, compassion, sacrifice, and unwavering determination". In Buddhist philosophy, loving-kindness (Metta) and non-harming (Ahimsa) are foundational principles. Yet these values are not confined to any one religion or tradition; they are timeless and universal.

The monks embodied these teachings, showing that peace begins within the individual heart before it can ever transform a community or a nation. It would have been easy for the monks to want recognition or organize dramatic demonstrations. Instead, they chose a quieter path. Their silence spoke volumes. As they passed through towns, cities, and rural highways, people noticed. Some joined them for a few miles. Others offered water, meals, or words of encouragement. Many simply paused to reflect. The monks' presence created ripples - small, personal understandings that rippled outward in ways impossible to measure.

Peace is often imagined as a political achievement; negotiated in conference rooms or enforced by treaties. But the monks' journey revealed a deeper truth: lasting peace is cultivated one person at a time. It begins when an individual chooses patience over anger, understanding over judgment, kindness over indifference. Each choice may seem small, but collectively they shape the moral fabric of society.

Walking 20 to 30 miles a day requires discipline and resilience. Over 108 days, fatigue and discomfort were their constant companions. Yet the monks continued, step after deliberate step. Their perseverance illustrated that peace is not passive. It demands sacrifice and commitment. It requires individuals willing to embody the change they wish to see, even when the path is long and the outcome uncertain.

Every day of their journey, they reminded those who followed them that peace does not arrive all at once. It grows through daily practice - through mindful breathing, compassionate listening, and acts of generosity. One peaceful person has the potential to inspire another and in this way, peace spreads quietly but powerfully. The monks' pilgrimage concluded in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 11 but its message continues. They showed us that we do not need to be loud to be heard. A calm presence, lived consistently and authentically, can move mountains of fear and division.

The Times MINDEN ONTARIO
THE ECHO HALIBURTON COUNTY

Editor's notes

Our team was recently recognized on a provincial level, with a number of nods through the Ontario Community Newspaper Awards. *The Haliburton County Echo* was nominated for General Excellence, and the *Minden Times* received an honourable mention in the same category.

Our writers were also acknowledged in the categories of best heritage feature, best news story, best rural news story, and humour columnist of the year.

Congratulations to our team, as well as our fellow community newspaper, *The Highlander,* for their well-deserved accolades.

For the full listing of local nominations, visit www.ocna.org.

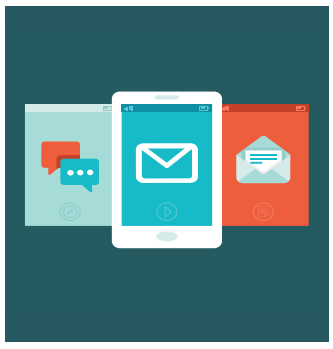
Please note that this edition of the newspaper was produced on Friday, Feb. 13 to accommodate press closures on Family Day. All events and news stories that occurred over the past weekend will be featured in next week's papers. Thank you for your understanding.

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

I'd like to thank Thomas, from the *Times*, for taking the time to interview me leading up to my 100th birthday celebration. Almost 250 friends and family attended, and I was overwhelmed with love and best wishes and some gifts that I don't have the foggiest notion to whom to send a thank you note! It took until 10:30 p.m. to open all the cards and I had the best, longest sleep ever! Thanks to my daughter Lois for organizing this and to all of those friends who lent a hand in small and big ways on my special day. Thanks to all those who came to celebrate with me. And thank you, Emily, for running the edited story the following week with the detailed corrections. Much appreciated.

Ruth MacBrien,
Minden



Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
emily@haliburtonpress.com

OPP warns public of rising trend in police impersonation scams

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is alerting residents across the region to an emerging scam trend involving suspects who pose as police officers to defraud victims of substantial amounts of money.

In recent reports, fraudsters have contacted victims by phone while claiming to be members of the OPP. In each case, the suspect used fabricated names, titles, and badge information to gain credibility. Victims were instructed to withdraw large sums of money and either send the funds through cryptocurrency platforms or hand over cash directly. These tactics resulted in significant financial losses, including incidents where victims paid between $6,000 and $13,000 to individuals falsely claiming to be officers.

Police confirm that the names and ranks provided by the scammers do not correspond with any OPP members. Fraudsters often use urgency, intimidation, and fear to pressure victims into complying with their demands.

Protect Yourself Against Police Impersonation Scams. The OPP is reminding the public of the following fraud prevention strategies:

- Police will never request money, cryptocurrency, gift cards, or financial transfers over the phone.
- Police will never demand immediate payment, threaten arrest, or pressure you to act urgently.
- Do not provide personal information, banking details, PINs, or identification numbers to unsolicited callers.
- Pause and talk to a trusted family member or friend before making any financial decision under pressure.

Verify or Report Through the OPP Non Emergency Line

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be an OPP officer and you are unsure of its legitimacy, you can contact the OPP non emergency line at 1-888-310-1122.

This number can be used to:

- Confirm whether an officer has attempted to contact you
- Report suspicious calls or attempted frauds
- Speak directly with police about fraud related concerns

Residents who have been targeted or victimized by fraud are encouraged to contact police and report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at -888-495-8501 or online at www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca.

The OPP continues to monitor fraud trends and reminds community members that awareness is one of the strongest tools against financial victimization.

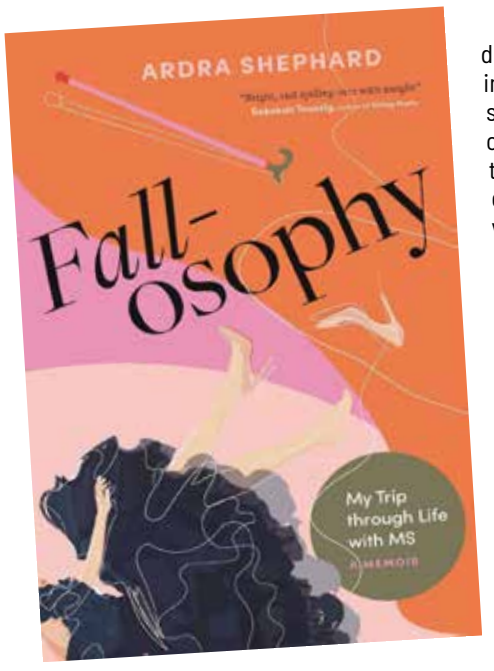
Submitted

Minden Memories

This 1916 photograph shows students and their teacher, Miss Bray, outside the Red School in Lutterworth Township. From the John Hulbig collection, it offers a glimpse into early school life in the county. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week



At twenty-three, Ardra Shephard is drifting through her twenties - dating the wrong guy, overspending on shoes, and dreaming of becoming an opera singer. She assumes there's time to figure things out - until a doctor diagnoses her with MS, dividing her life into Before and After. As the disease progresses, Ardra confronts fear, loss of mobility, and profound feelings of otherness. Yet as her worst-case scenarios unfold, she discovers an unexpected truth: disability is not a tragedy, and a difficult life can still be rich with joy, agency, and self-worth.

Fallosophy by Ardra Shephard is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Haliburton Fish by Karen Gervais. Gervais has been painting, running, cycling, skiing and enjoying art in the wilds of Haliburton for the last 20 years. She teaches art at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School and encourages students to be active and enjoy the outdoors through her coaching pursuits in cross-country running, Nordic skiing and track and field. She is a mother, cat-lover and frequent visitor of the Sculpture Forest and Glebe Park. /submitted

Ethereal Forest by Wendy Wood. Wood has been creating art all her life. She started out as an electrical draftsperson and the love of using a pencil led to a career in landscape painting. She was introduced to crochet at a very young age and that appreciation of fiber crept back into her life in woven form. Living in the Haliburton Highlands for over 20 years has proven to be a never-ending source of artistic inspiration. /submitted

Eyesore to beauty: Utility boxes transformed into masterpieces

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

Those utility control boxes that we usually walk past without a second glance may have some people stopping and taking a second look, thanks to an initiative by the Cultural Resources Committee of Dysart et al, which saw these industrial eyesores transformed into works of art.

The project is the latest in a string of community-driven efforts to weave art into the fabric of daily life. Jim Blake, curator of the Haliburton Sculpture Forest and a member of the municipality's Cultural Resources Committee, explained the idea of using these sewage pump station control boxes as metal canvases.

"Over the years, some of these control boxes have been replaced while others have started rusting after a number of years," he said in a recent telephone interview. "I've driven past the large one near Whispering Pines that is rusting and said to myself, 'It's too bad that it isn't more attractive.'"

Blake went on to explain that he had noticed several other communities had hired artists to create work to cover these types of utility boxes. So from there, the committee launched a "call to artists" last year for a chance to have their art featured on a control box.

The response from the creative community was overwhelming. The committee received 40 submissions from 25 local artists, with a jury selecting the finalists.

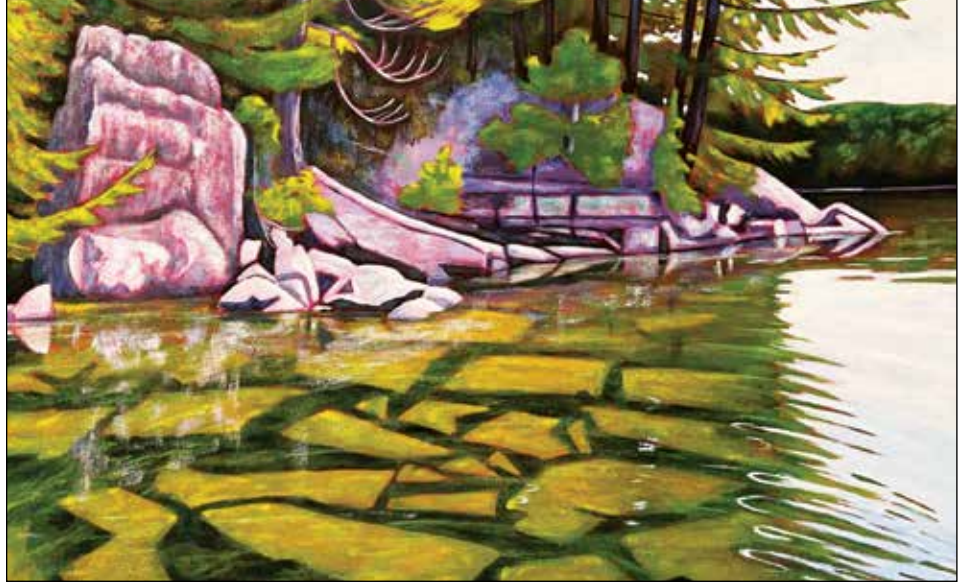
"The delightful thing was how many different artists submitted to this," Blake said. "It was just fabulous to see the variety of work."

The artwork of Susan Hay, Al Van Mil, Karen Gervais, and Wendy Wood was selected to be featured on the control boxes throughout the municipality.

The transformation isn't just a coat of paint. The municipality partnered with a specialized vinyl-wrapping company near Lindsay, Ont., to ensure the art can withstand the Haliburton climate.

These high-tech wraps are designed to last five to seven years, featuring UV protection and the ability to be removed or replaced without damaging the integrity of the control boxes.

The project was made possible through funding from private donors, the municipality, and the County of Haliburton tourism department. All images on the boxes are included in this article, with a brief outline of the artist, and some background on their styles.



Sherborne Lake Rocks Under Water by Susan Hay. Hay is a landscape artist, living in Haliburton County. Her training as an artist began when she taught herself to paint using Walter Foster "How to Paint" books. She eventually took courses at the Haliburton College of Art and Design. She has been devoting much of the past 25 years to painting. She is a member of The Studio Tour, Haliburton Highlands and exhibits her work at the Rails End Gallery in Haliburton. Susan's landscapes are painted on texturized canvases and are mostly based on photos she has taken from the bow of her canoe. /submitted

Sumac by Al Van Mil. Van Mil was born on the Isle of Texel, in the North Sea of the Netherlands. His grew up in a scholarly and artistic family. For most of the last 50 years, Al Van Mil has created visual artworks using a large variety of media, including acrylic or oil paint on large canvases. He spent his high school years in Haliburton. Al and his wife and fellow artist Annette Blady own a home on Miskwabi Lake in Haliburton County and are long-time participants in the Studio Tour - Haliburton Highlands. /submitted

Red Hawks

Ski skills

COSSA Nordic was held at Glebe Park on Wednesday, Feb. 11, and welcomed schools from all over the region to participate.
The Novice/Elementary skiers started the day with the interval races approximately three, five and seven kilometres respectively. Relays then started at 1:30 in the afternoon in the stadium area. Red Hawks are the skiers in the black and red uniforms, and performed well in the snowy conditions. /ADAM FRISK staff

Red Hawks

The Haliburton Highlands Secondary School Red Hawks Girls' Hockey team hosted their first tournament on home ice this past week. While the team is a combination of some players with experience and some fresh to the ice, the team worked well together to secure one win and two losses over the course of the day. The tournament follows a cancelled tournament earlier in the year due to an inclement weather day. /ADAM FRISK staff

Notice
(Applicant – Van Leeuwen)

In the matter of the *Municipal Act* and in the matter of a proposed By-law of the Corporation of the Municipality of Highlands East to close, stop-up and convey certain portions of a Shore Road Allowance along the shore of **Koshlong Lake**, more particularly hereinafter described.

Notice Is Hereby Given, pursuant to the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, and the Municipal Procedures, that the Township Council of The Corporation of the Municipality of Highlands East proposes to consider and if deemed advisable, to pass at a virtual meeting on **Tuesday, March 10th, 2026** 9:30 a.m., a By-Law to close, stop-up and convey to the adjacent land owners the following described lands:

Firstly: Part of Lot 12, Concession 15, Township of Glamorgan, Municipality of Highlands East, County of Haliburton, shown as Part 1 on Plan of Survey 19R-11193, made by **Bishop Geyer Surveying Inc. completed May 26, 2025.**

Secondly: Part of the Original Shore Road Allowance in Front of Lot 12, Concession 15, Township of Glamorgan, Municipality of Highlands East, County of Haliburton, shown as Parts 2 and 3 on Plan of Survey 19R-11193, made by **Bishop Geyer Surveying Inc. completed May 26, 2025**. *(Part 3 being the flooded portion to be retained by the Municipality of Highlands East).*

The Plan of Survey 19R-11193 is available to you for inspection by you making an appointment at the Municipality of Highlands East offices, Wilberforce, Ontario.

The above-described lands, by resolution, have been declared to be surplus. If you wish to attend the virtual meeting, please call or e-mail the Municipal Clerk prior to the day of the public meeting so you can be provided with a link or phone number for the meeting. If you do not have the capability to attend a virtual meeting, please provide written comments to the Municipal Clerk prior to the public meeting.

Any person or his or her counsel, solicitor or agent who attends the virtual meeting shall be afforded an opportunity to make representations in respect of the within matter.

And Take Further Notice that if the public wishes to participate regarding the purchase of Shoreline Road Allowance please contact the Municipal Clerk.

Dated at the Municipality of Highlands East, Wilberforce, Ontario this 10th day of February, 2026.

Robyn Rogers, Municipal Clerk
Box 295, 2249 Loop Road,
WILBERFORCE, ON K0L 3C0
rrogers@highlandseast.ca
(705) 448-2981

STR licensing draws mixed reviews in Highlands East

from page 1

bylaw.

"People come in, and they would be able to speak directly to the council or anyone else for that matter, and to basically identify what their challenges are and listen to what has been compiled by our staff not for the purposes of being adversarial but for the purposes of being able to get together as a team of entrepreneurs … to come up with a cohesive solution to this problem," he said.

Since the program launched in 2024, the municipality has been tracking down listings and ensuring the units are up to code. According to the report, staff have identified 127 individual STRs across platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO.

The licensing process has seen mixed success for owners. A total of 73 licences have been fully approved, while 30 formal complaints have been filed and addressed since the program's inception. According to the staff report, inspections triggered nine building "change of use" permits and seven septic system upgrades.

The program has generated a combined $105,468 to date. The total includes $57,273 in licensing fees and $48,194 from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT). CAO Brittany McCaw noted that while licensing covers the cost of running the program, the tax revenue is a direct investment in the area's future. Half of the MAT funds are funnelled into tourism initiatives across Haliburton County.

While council was unanimous in wanting to hear from the public, there was discussion on how to keep the process productive.

"The big fear when you do this kind of thing about something like STRs is the chaos that could come from a meeting like that," Ryall explained. "There's no need for chaos. If there are written submissions beforehand, there is a limited period of time where each person can speak, and it has to be speaking directly to the subject, not adversarial, browbeating, and verbal complaints that 'I don't want the bylaw,' and all that kind of stuff. There may be relevance to it, but why?"

> *"The big fear when you do this kind of thing about something like STRs is the chaos that could come from a meeting like that ...*
>
> — Cec Ryall, Highlands East Deputy Mayor

Council directed staff to implement four methods of engagement simultaneously. A formal public meeting in late March. Attendees must register and provide written comments in advance. Secondly, staff will contact all currently licensed operators directly for their input. A public survey, both online and paper versions, will be available at the municipal office. Lastly, written submissions are open to all stakeholders for detailed feedback.

A point of friction arose regarding how quickly staff could summarize the plan for the public. While the CAO cautioned that compiling data takes time, the deputy mayor pushed for a summary briefing by the first week of March to avoid "procrastination."

The CAO clarified that while the review is underway, the current rules remain the law of the land.

"The bylaw is still in force and effect as it is right now," McCaw reminded the council. "In the interim, it's still business as usual until there is an actual change."

HE shoots down federal gun buyback program

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

Highlands East council voted to decline participation in the federal gun buyback program, joining a slew of other Ontario municipalities and police services not taking part in the initiative.

The motion was introduced by councillor Angela Lewis and passed with broad support during last week's council meeting. The resolution signals the municipality's refusal to assist in the federal program, which requires owners of reclassified firearms to surrender or deactivate their guns by Oct. 30.

The councillor argued that the federal initiative unfairly targets "vetted, licensed gun owners" while ignoring the root causes of rising crime. Addressing the mayor and council, Lewis called the buyback program a "misguided attempt" to provide an illusion of safety.

"Targeting licensed vetted gun owners who have complied to the rules, regulations, and laws that have been implemented over the years is a misguided attempt to give the illusion to Canadians that the federal government is making our cities, municipalities, and communities safer," she said.

> *(It) is a misguided attempt to give the illusion to Canadians that the federal government is making our cities, municipalities, and communities safer.*
>
> — HE Councillor Angela Lewis

Lewis went on to note that Highlands East is a rural municipality where firearms are deeply rooted in the heritage of local families, farmers, and sports shooters.

"We are a rural municipality with many generations of hunters who are licensed, vetted gun owners," she said. "I'm asking the federal government to redirect our taxpayer money from demonizing law-abiding licensed gun owners as criminals and focus on getting criminals and illegal guns off our streets."

The township joins several other municipalities in the province opposing the program. Several police services, including the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), have declined to participate in the program.

"At this time, after consultation with the government of Ontario, the OPP will not participate in the Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program (ASFCP)," the police service said in an email to the newspaper. "The OPP does not have the capacity to collect all "assault-style" firearms in the province. If an individual attends an OPP detachment to surrender their prohibited firearm, the OPP will accept the firearm for destruction. However, that individual will not be eligible for compensation through the ASFCP.

Since 2020, the federal government has banned about 2,500 makes and models of what the government calls "assault-style" firearms, arguing they are designed for combat on the battlefield, not hunters and sport shooters.

Owners of banned firearms have until the end of March to declare interest in the program offering compensation for turning in or permanently deactivating their guns.

The resolution was carried by council, and it formally declares that Highlands East objects to the program "as it is currently being mandated and implemented."

The municipality will send a copy of the resolution to several federal officials, including Prime Minister Mark Carney and MP Jamie Schmale.

County Of Haliburton

Notice Of Complete Application

Concerning a Proposed Draft Plan of Subdivision
And Common Element Condominium
File No. 46-T-25001 and 46-CE-25001
(Lands of 2463756 Ontario Inc.)

The County of Haliburton has received complete applications for a draft plan of subdivision and condominium and is providing notice in accordance with Section 51 (19.1) and (19.4) of the *Planning Act.*

Location:
The lands subject to the application are described legally as Part of Lots 27 through 31, Concession 8, Part of Lots 27 and 28, Concession 9, and Part of Lot 27, Concessions 10 and 11, in the Geographic Township of Harcourt (Municipality of Dysart et al).

Purpose and Effect of The Applications:
The draft plan of subdivision proposes to create 25 residential and 38 waterfront residential lots (63 lots total), 2 blocks (including a waterfront access block), and a common element condominium roadway.

Appeals:
If a person or public body would otherwise have the ability to appeal the decision of the County of Haliburton but does not make written submissions to the County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision before the approval authority gives or refuses to give approval to the draft plan of subdivision, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

If a person or public body does not make written submissions to The County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision before the County of Haliburton gives or refuses to give approval to the draft plan of subdivision, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

Additional Information and Materials:
Additional information and materials are available electronically upon request. For further information, contact Elizabeth Purcell, Director of Planning (705) 286-1333 x 222, or fax (705) 286-4829 or email at epurcell@haliburtoncounty.ca.

Concurrent Applications:
A concurrent local official plan amendment (File No. D08-OP-2025-001) was refused by the Municipality of Dysart et al Council and is currently subject to an appeal with the Ontario Land Tribunal (File No. OLT-25-000818).

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision, you must make a written request to Gary Dyke, CAO/Clerk, The County of Haliburton, 11 Newcastle Street, Minden, ON, K0M 2K0.

Check Us Out Online:
www.haliburtonecho.ca

Snaffle and Mane marks three years with renovated storefront

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

For many, a third anniversary is cause for a vacation. For Gillian Taylor, owner of the local floral and plant shop Snaffle and Mane, it was cause for some coveralls and a sledgehammer.

Taylor recently hit her three-year milestone in Haliburton, and instead of bouncing off to Vietnam as originally planned, she spent her anniversary month gutting and renovating her 83 Maple Ave. storefront to better serve a community that she says has surprised her with its passion for "something a little different and elevated."

"I'm exhausted," Taylor laughed, reflecting on swapping vacation for renovation in a recent interview. "I needed a holiday. I was supposed to be in Vietnam for two weeks. Instead, I renovated my shop."

Since opening its doors, Snaffle and Mane has carved out a distinct niche in the local market by skipping the standard "grocery store" bouquets made up of carnations or Gerber daisies, and offering unique, high-end florals and a curated selection of plants.

"Am I for everybody? No," Taylor admitted. "I've had to learn to say no sometimes. You have to have a vision and stick by it, especially in an artistic position. I think people in Haliburton appreciate having something a little different and elevated."

That commitment to a specific aesthetic, paired with a relentless focus on customer service, often handling client correspondence at all hours of the day, has built a "huge regular following" that has sustained the shop through its first three years.

Snaffle and Mane owner Gillian Taylor pictured in her freshly renovated floral shop. /ADAM FRISK staff

As for the recent renovation, it wasn't just about slapping some fresh paint on the walls and moving a couch; the shop owner redesigned the space to prioritize efficiency and "flow." Something that 20-plus years in the restaurant management industry had taught her.

"I really enjoy efficiency," Taylor said. "The new space allows me to keep the workspace private while maintaining a hospitality-focused storefront. It's about having a system where things find their home."

She said the layout had already paid off. Processing a large shipment for Valentine's Day would normally take Taylor three hours to prepare and take care of, now it takes just one. The renovation also introduced a large, custom-built workbench designed to host future floral and plant workshops.

The name of the flower shop often draws curiosity. A self-described "horse person," Taylor said the name was derived from her equestrian background, but chose it specifically because it didn't box her in.

"It keeps the name open," she explained. "If I decided tomorrow I wanted to sell sneakers, I could. It's not 'Flowers R Us.' It leaves things open-ended."

While she isn't planning on switching to selling kicks anytime soon, Taylor remains connected to the emotional aspect of her craft. She reflected on a particular highlight of her first three years of creating a bouquet for a client to give to someone nearing the end of their life.

"Just the idea that these were going to be like the last flowers that they were going to have in their house," Taylor said before pausing for a moment. "I wanted to make them extra special and really take my time to make something beautiful."

As Snaffle and Mane enters its fourth year, Taylor has her sights on settling into the new space and perhaps getting that well-deserved vacation.

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Inclusivity a top priority for local youth

from page 4

gender affirming care. Vossen says that gender affirming care should not be considered specialized care.

"Often patients are put on really long waitlists by doctors that mean well, but are not versed in gender-affirming care," said Vossen. "They think they are doing what is best for the patient, but I find it disappointing because there are so many resources available for health care providers now to expand their knowledge in order to access care that is important."

"It is quite a journey to get there, especially the younger you are," said Sisson. "The younger you are, the longer you are on that journey."

Relationships, both platonic and romantic, are a huge part of the development of youth.

"A healthy relationship is one based in respect and trust," said Vossen. "It feels like one where you can fully be yourself without fear of judgement or shame, where you can express all of yourself and be met with love and empathy."

Some advice Vossen shared is to consider if your thoughts are heard, and if you can show up as yourself in a relationship.

A huge part of their peer support program is to connect 2SLGBTQ+ youth together and show them that they have a long future.

"It is impossible to envision a future for yourself if you don't know that people who share your experiences have survived and thrived before you," said Vossen. "That representation is essential."

One example of representation is at the popular Pride in the Highlands events across the county in August.

The growth of a youth's social circle can act as a direct antidote to the hurdles that 2SLGBTQ+ youth face.

"Finding community shows you that there is no singular right way to be trans or queer," said Vossen.

Developing a relationship with yourself, being authentic, and unapologetically embracing yourself are all lessons that cisgenedered people can learn from the trans community.

"I think rural queers are really underestimated," said Vossen.

With the challenges of growing up queer, Vossen says that it makes for more creative, resilient youth.

For those under 20, there is a 24-hour 2SLGBTQ+ youth support line that can be texted at 647-694-4275 or communicate online at youthline.ca

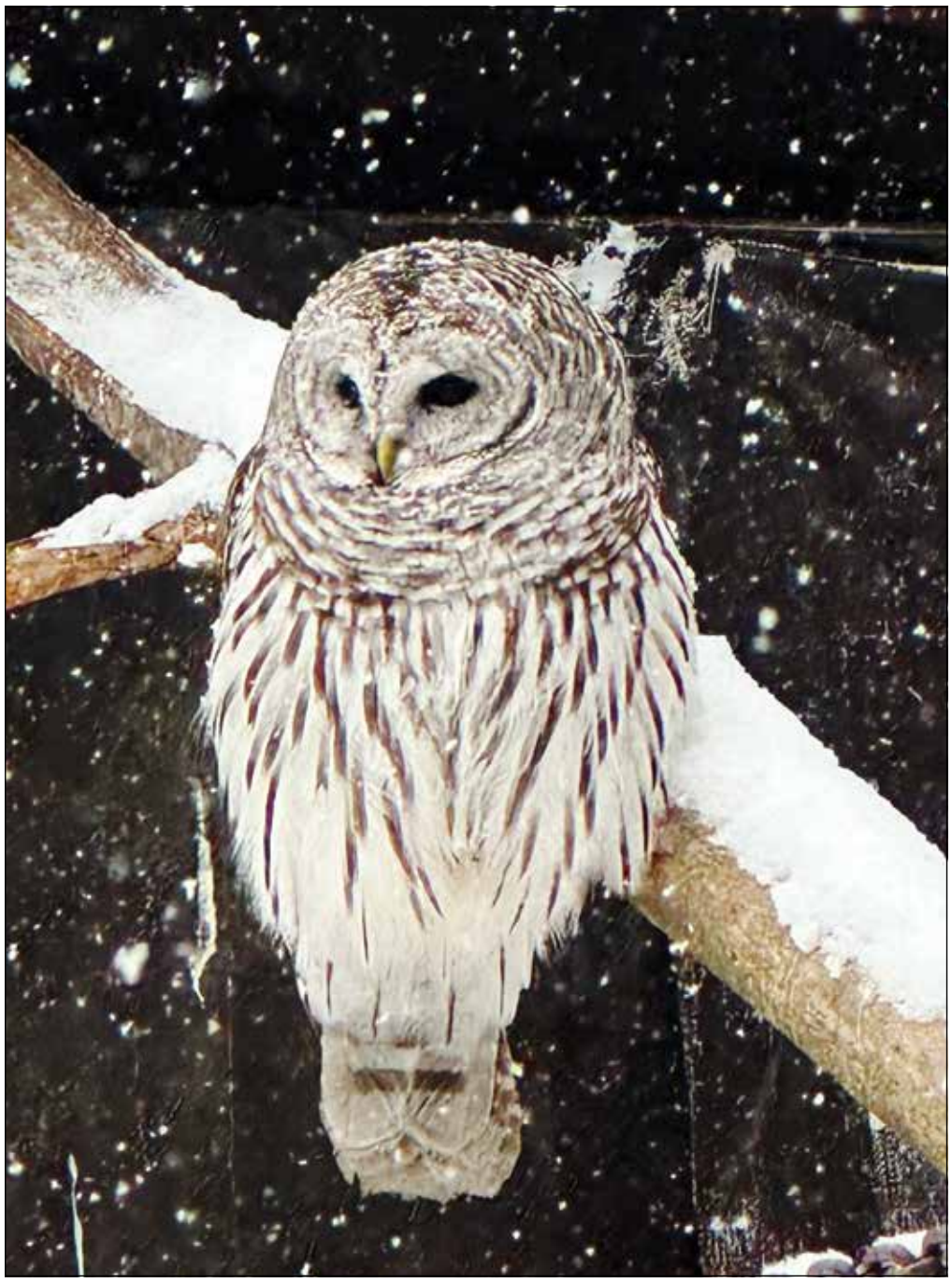
The phone number for the Trans Lifeline in Canada is 877-330-6366.

The Trans Peer Outreach program, offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association is available to those living in the Haliburton County area. More information about this program and how to sign up is available at cmhahkpr.ca.

Appointments can be made to discuss gender affirming care locally through the Haliburton Highlands Family Healthcare Team's website hhfht.ca.

Carl Vossen, Haliburton Wellness Hub's new 2SLGBTQ+ Peer Support Specialist wants to create opportunities for connection for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Haliburton County, make youth feel less alone, and support youth through their life journeys. Vossen will be available for peer support in Haliburton on Wednesdays and alternating Tuesdays and Fridays. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Drop-in hours for the Youth Wellness Hub include Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Fridays from 3:30 to 5 p.m. They also offer drop-in services at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre every other Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.



Owl by Destiny Lapierre.

Moose peeking through by Tammy Nash.

Blue Jay by Jill Moulton.

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Another cold snap hits Haliburton County

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

It's been a winter for the books, as the County of Haliburton wades through its third major cold warning of the year in early February.

When temperatures dip to consistently below -20°C or colder, Lakelands Public Health sends out a warning to all individuals falling within the warning area, throughout Haliburton County, the City of Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland County, and the City and County of Peterborough.

"Temperatures have been persistently cold lately, and it's important for everyone to take precautions whenever spending extended time outdoors," said Julie Bromley, manager of emergency services and healthy environments with Lakelands Public Health. With the weekends hovering between -30 °C to -35 °C or colder, Bromley noted cause for concern if anyone is exposed to the elements, particularly with the wind chill.

"Extreme cold conditions can pose serious health risks, especially for people experiencing homelessness, older adults, young children, and those with chronic health conditions," she said. "Staying informed about weather conditions, dressing appropriately for the cold, and checking in on vulnerable neighbours are key steps to staying safe."

Lakelands Public Health noted that temperatures are particularly frigid late at night and early in the mornings, and individuals braving the outdoors should be prepared. It was also expressed that if it's too cold for you, it's certainly too cold for your pet to be in the elements, as well.

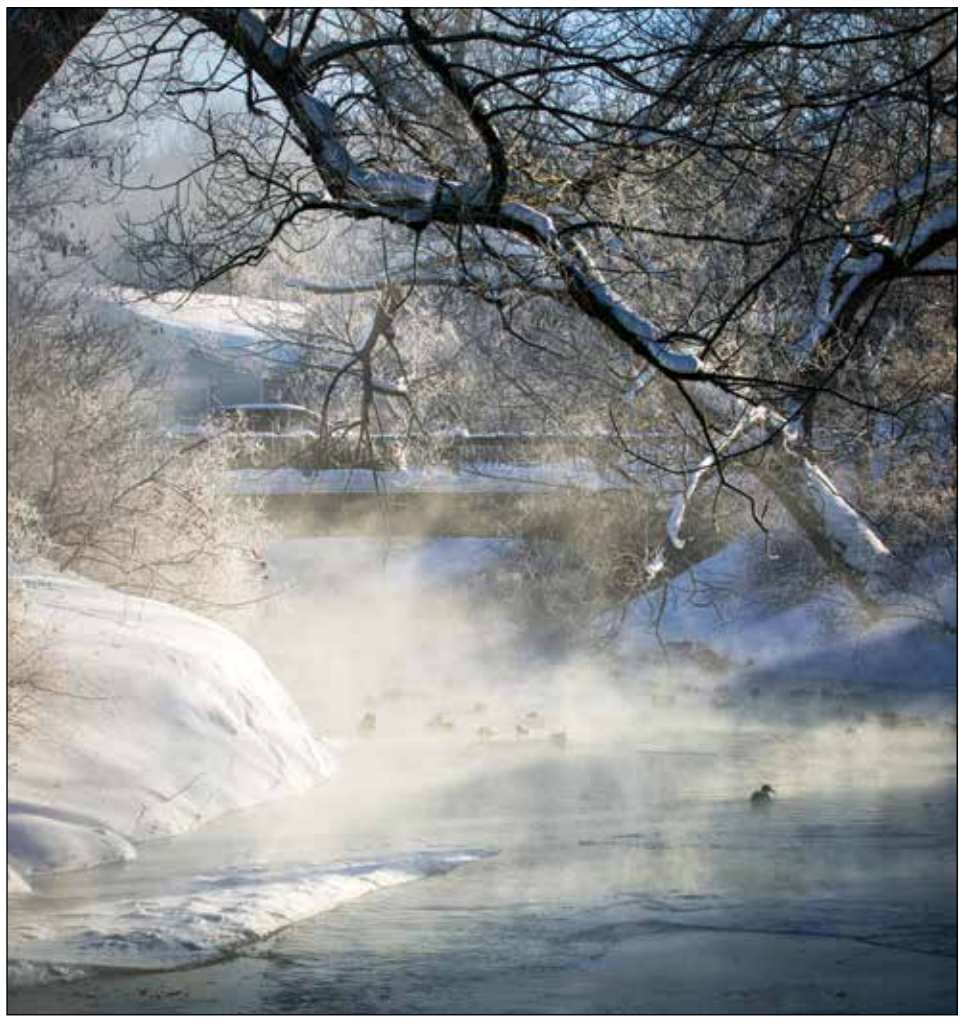
Signs of frostbite include numb, pale, and hardened skin on exposed digits and features. Hypothermia symptoms include confusion, slurred speech, difficulty walking, and intense shivering. Lakelands noted that severe hypothermia is a medical emergency, and requires immediate attention.

Lakelands strongly encouraged individuals to mitigate time outdoors during these cold snaps, and ensure home heating systems are functioning properly, and carbon monoxide detectors are working.

They also encouraged individuals to utilize heating centres where possible. At the time, Minden Hills is the sole municipality with dedicated services to offer heating. "S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena is open Monday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m." said Candace McGuigan, the director of community services for Minden. "People can come and get warmed up or use cell phone charging stations if needed."

"We monitor temperatures and warnings from Environment Canada, as well as the programming and events at our facility and what capacity and further space we can offer, if needed," added McGuigan. "We work with user groups, if we think we may have people coming to warm up, and designate space in the gymnasium hallway or walking track."

The cold warning ended on Feb. 9, with Lakelands Public Health continuing monitoring weather conditions and providing updates as needed. Residents can also sign up for WeatherCAN alerts to receive timely weather notifications.



A crisp day in Haliburton showcases the mist coming off the river that winds into Head Lake Park. This year, there have been a record number of formal cold warnings shared from Lakelands Public Health. /ADAM FRISK staff

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Go skating in Dysart and Highlands East

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

Perhaps your holiday resolution is to exercise more this year, or meet more people in the community.

Now that we are past the holiday season, some may be experiencing the winter blues and say that there is nothing to do or keep active with the snow, slush, and cold weather.

Well, it is time to dust off your skates and feel free as a bird again by visiting your local indoor or outdoor skating rinks across the county.

Across Dysart and Highlands East, there are five rinks for people to go skating at.

Dysart

There are four skating rinks in the municipality of Dysart. These rinks include A.J. LaRue Arena, the Maple Avenue Rink, West Guilford Rink, and the Harcourt Outdoor Rink.

Dysart's outdoor rinks include the Maple Avenue Rink, West Guilford Rink, and Harcourt Outdoor Rink.

Andrea Mueller, manager of programs and events for Dysart says that the outdoor skating rinks are very popular with their local communities. The rinks see the most visitors after school, in the evenings, and on the weekends.

Since Mueller began working with Dysart in 2013, the two existing outdoor rinks, in West Guilford and Harcourt, were in rough condition. The rinks have been repaired and in 2018, Dysart partnered with the Rotary Club of Haliburton to create an outdoor rink at the former skate park. The rink is maintained by municipal staff and in the warmer months, the rink acts as a ball hockey court.

"Skating at the outdoor rinks, gets you outside and breathing in the fresh air," said Mueller. "There is something magical about lacing up a pair of skates and having the opportunity to skate outdoors."

All the outdoor rinks are available on a first come, first serve basis. The Maple Avenue Rink is located at 76 Maple Avenue, the West Guilford Outdoor Rink is located at 1061 Kennisis Lake Road, and the Harcourt Outdoor Rink is located at 5004 Midway Street in Harcourt.

Mueller says that the public should be aware that the rinks should not be used during periods of thaw, when the ice surface is wet, soft, or when the rink is closed. The outdoor rinks are unsupervised and any use of the outdoor rinks are at the user's risk. All skaters are asked to wear properly fitting helmets. The rinks can be used for both skating and hockey, but the municipality asks that all users of the rink are respectful of one another in the space. No contact hockey is permitted.

Nothing is more Canadian than connecting with your local community at the outdoor skating rink.

The unmistakable A.J. LaRue Arena is situated in the heart of Haliburton. The arena is named for Albert LaRue, a beloved community member and coach who pushed for the community centre and rink in Haliburton.

LaRue's preservation and bus company also paved the way for the Haliburton Junior D Huskies.

The A.J. LaRue Arena offers a variety of both skating and shinny options for everyone to enjoy. Stick and Puck is for those who are looking to improve their stick handling skills. This skate is specifically offered to allow for the use of sticks and pucks while skating around.

There will be no goalies and playing hockey is not permitted. Helmets are strongly recommended

It is $2 per skater to participate.

Public Skating is for those wanting to have a nice skating experience. A CSA approved helmet is strongly recommended. No one will be allowed on the ice without skates. Youth seven and under must be accompanied by an adult. No reckless behaviour will be permitted, including games of tag and chasing other skaters. No food or drinks are allowed near the ice surface, player's benches or penalty boxes. Hockey sticks and pucks are not permitted during public skating times. It is $2 to participate.

Shinny is an informal game of hockey, often without goaltenders, many rules, or the competitive nature of hockey. Full hockey equipment must be worn. A CSA approved helmet must be worn by all skaters. Slap shots, checking, and other body contact is not permitted. Shinny costs $5 to participate in.

Youth Shinny costs $5 to participate in and is intended for skaters aged 10 to 15 years old.

Adults Only Skating for adults looking to skate recreationally. Sticks and pucks are not permitted during this time. Properly fitting helmets are strongly recommended. It costs $2 per skater.

Parent and Tot Skate is intended for parents and their children to enjoy skating together.

Sensory Friendly Skates occur regularly throughout the month. Sensory friendly skates are for those wanting to have a skating experience with reduced noise, dim lighting, and no music. Helmets are strongly recommended. Youth aged seven and under must be accompanied by an adult. Parents cannot carry their youth while skating on the ice surface. Hockley sticks and pucks will not be permitted. No reckless behaviour, chasing, or games of tag are permitted.

Sensory Friendly Skates occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Please visit dysartetal.ca for accurate skating times.

The A.J. LaRue Arena is located at 728 Mountain Street in Haliburton.

Highlands East

Highlands East is home to one indoor arena, the Keith Tallman Memorial Arena. A cornerstone of the community, the Keith Tallman Memorial Arena was named after Keith Tallman who served in local government for nearly 40 years. Tallman served 28 years as Reeve of Monmouth Township and was on the Haliburton County Council for 36 years, with several as acting Warden.

Free Public Skating is intended for everyone to come out and enjoy some skating.

Free Public Skating takes place on Sundays from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Adults and Seniors Free Public Skating is intended for both adults and seniors to enjoy recreational skating.

Free Adults and Seniors Public Skating takes place on Tuesdays from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Free Parents and Tots Skating is intended for parents with their children.

The Free Parent and Tots Skating takes place from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Skating is a great way to get out and explore Haliburton County during the cold winter months. Pictured, Pearl and Ruby Mansfield explore the Dysart arena during a past skating season. /FILE

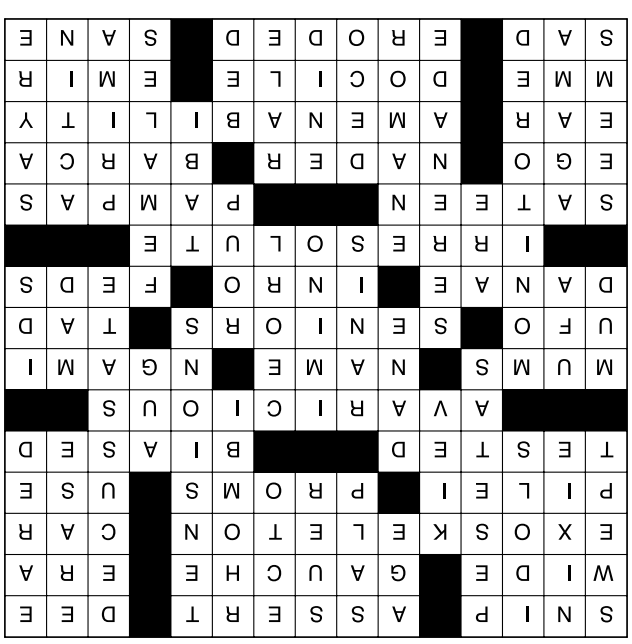
There is also hockey available to be played for a fee. Men's pickup hockey takes place on Tuesdays from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m Women's pickup hockey takes place on Mondays from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Old Timer's Hockey takes place from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursdays.

The Keith Tallman Memorial Arena is located at 2256 Loop Road in Wilberforce.

Highlands East's Property Supervisor Jim Alden recommends wearing a helmet while skating at the arena.

There is something for everyone to do this winter, if you know where to look. During these cold winter months, it is important to get outside and get moving. Soon enough, warm weather will be on its way.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS



SUDOKU SOLUTION

2	9	1	6	3	5	4	7	8
4	6	3	1	7	8	2	5	9
7	8	5	9	2	4	1	3	6
6	3	2	4	1	9	7	8	5
8	1	7	3	5	2	9	6	4
5	4	9	8	6	7	3	1	2
3	2	8	5	4	1	6	9	7
1	5	4	7	9	6	8	2	3
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Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
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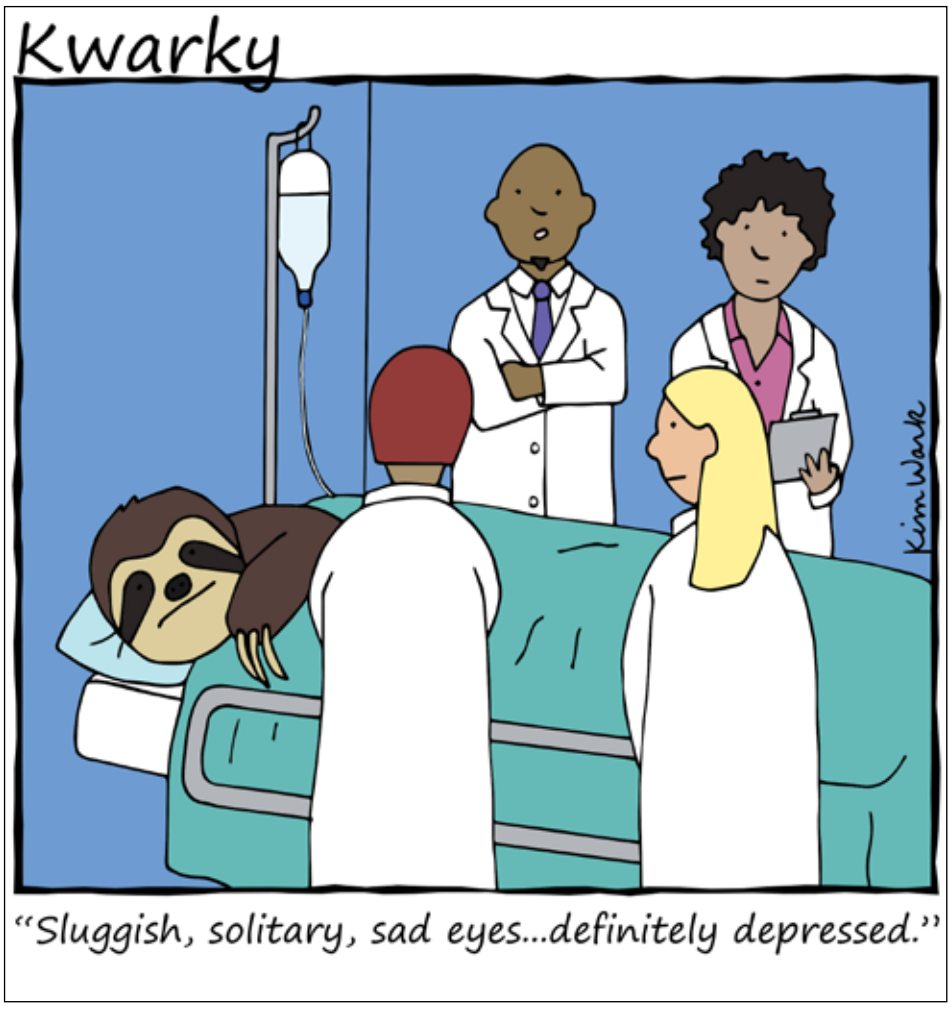

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					5	4		
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	4	9						2
								7
1	5							
		6	2	8				

Level: Intermediate

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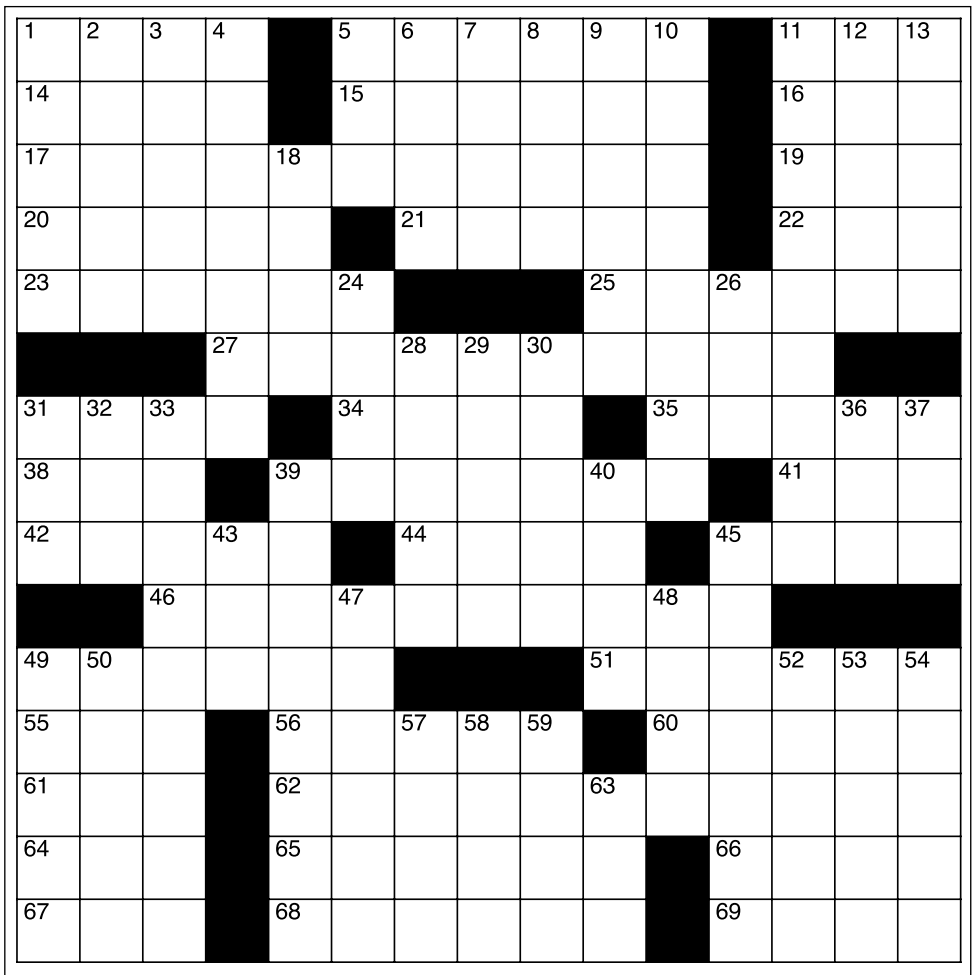
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 17



CLUES ACROSS
1. Cut quickly
5. A way to state clearly
11. River in NE Scotland
14. Expansive
15. Lacking social polish
16. Amount of time
17. Frame
19. Automobile
20. Toadstools
21. High school dances
22. Utilize
23. Experimented with
25. One-sided
27. Acquisitive
31. Potted plants
34. Everyone has one
35. Kalahari Desert lake
38. Unidentified flying object
39. People 65 and over
41. Small amount
42. Daughter of Acrisius
44. Ornamental box
45. Government agents
46. Uncertain
49. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
51. Treeless plains
55. One's sense of self-importance
56. Consumer advocate
60. Type of lounger
61. Body part
62. Can be persuaded
64. Woman (French)
65. Ready and willing to be taught
66. Arab ruler title
67. Unhappy
68. Gradually went away
69. Able to think clearly

CLUES DOWN
1. Brushed
2. Small water spirit (Germ.)
3. Heroes
4. Monetary units
5. Some don't want to share theirs
6. Free-swimming invertebrate
7. Litigates
8. Outer
9. Parallelograms
10. Uneasy feelings
11. Cross
12. A way to remove
13. Pages can be dog-__
18. Ukrainian city
24. A citizen of Denmark
26. Month
28. Hindu queens
29. Group of chemicals
30. Rider of Rohan
31. Wet dirt
32. Southwestern Russia city
33. Observed
36. Angry
37. DriversÕ licenses
39. Musical composition
40. Auction
43. They __
45. Women
47. Be filled with love for
48. Thick-soled sock
49. Appears
50. Old World lizard
52. The leading performer
53. Protein
54. "Gunga Din"script writer
57. Art __, around 1920
58. __ Blyton, children's author
59. Abnormal breathing
63. A place to rest

Answers on page 17

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2 bedroom/ 1 bedroom + sitting room, upper floor apartment, non-smoker. Located in rural area between Haliburton and Minden. Fridge and stove, partially furnished. Rent is $750, including utilities, with 1st and last month's rent required. Applicants must have a full time job or pension and provide references. Please contact : jimdeitz50@gmail.com

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EVENTS

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March 4	Highland Hills United Church
March 11	St. Paul's Anglican Church
March 18	Our Lady of Fantima Catholic Church
March 25	Minden Bible Church

Service 12 Noon followed by soup lunch
By Donation

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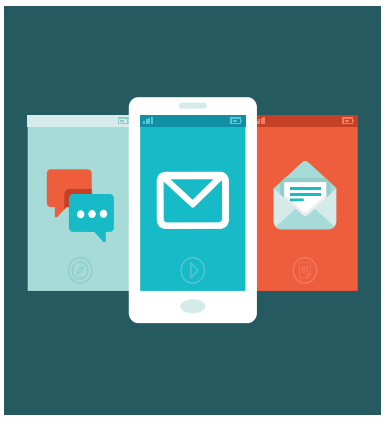

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EMPLOYMENT

The Corporation of the County of Haliburton Requires a Grants & Procurements Coordinator (18-month contract)

The County of Haliburton is currently accepting applications for a Grants & Procurements Coordinator. This new, vacant position is currently offered as a fixed term 18-month contract.

Reporting to the Deputy Treasurer, this position secures external funding opportunities and ensures compliant and transparent procurement processes. This dual-function role prioritizes responsibilities associated with identifying, securing, and administering grants The successful candidate will have post-secondary education and 4-5 years of experience in a relevant field.

This position includes participation in the OMERS defined benefit pension program and employer paid extended health benefits.The hourly wage range is $36.32 - $42.49.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a more detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than **Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 4:30pm.**

We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

The Municipality of Dysart et al is recruiting a Deputy Treasurer

Due to an upcoming retirement, we are seeking applications from experienced and qualified candidates to fulfill the position of Deputy Treasurer.

The complete detailed job description can be viewed through the Municipal website at: www.dysartetal.ca/careers

We offer a comprehensive benefit program and enrolment in the OMERS pension plan and a competitive salary grid from $80,464 to $94,131 per annum. Expected start date is Monday, May 4, 2026.

Please submit a resume and cover letter, preferably via email, no later than 4:00 pm on Monday February 23, 2026, to the attention of the Human Resources Manager – Municipality of Dysart et al – hr@dysartetal.ca
P.O. Box 389, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0

We thank all of those who apply, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodation for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes.

OBITUARY

In Loving Memory of

Ronald (Ronnie) Jacob Graham

Passed away peacefully at the Haliburton Hospital on Friday, February 13, 2026 surrounded by his family, in his 90th year.

Beloved husband of the late Millie (Dufty), Edna (Lounsbury), Della (Mintz) and survived by his partner Glady (Lawson). Dear father of Wayne (Lou), Randy (Shari), Scott (Mary) and Tanya (Richard). Loving grandpa of Nicole, Christopher, Jen, Joe, Tyler, Lyndsay, Gage and great grandpa of Simon, Noah, Ocean, Logan, Juliette and Oliver. Dear brother to 5 brothers and 6 sisters. Fondly remembered by his nieces, nephews, family and friends. The family would like to thank the exceptional care from Dr. Lupu and the staff at the Haliburton Hospital.

Friends are invited to visit the family at the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., 127 Bobcaygeon Rd., P.O. Box 427, Minden K0M 2K0 on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 from 11:00 am until the time of the Service to Celebrate Ron's Life at 1:00 pm. Reception to follow in the Monk-Cray Family Centre at the funeral home. Spring Interment at Kinmount Cemetery.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family.

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Hodgson meets with school councils

by Andrew Milne

MPP Chris Hodgson told members of Haliburton County school councils last week that they are very much part of the province's plans.

What those plans are, however, he couldn't really say yet.

Members of councils from across the county met with Hodgson last week at Archie Stouffer Elementary School.

The meeting, requested by the councils, was called to give them an opportunity to ask questions on the implementation of the changes to education proposed by the province in mid-January.

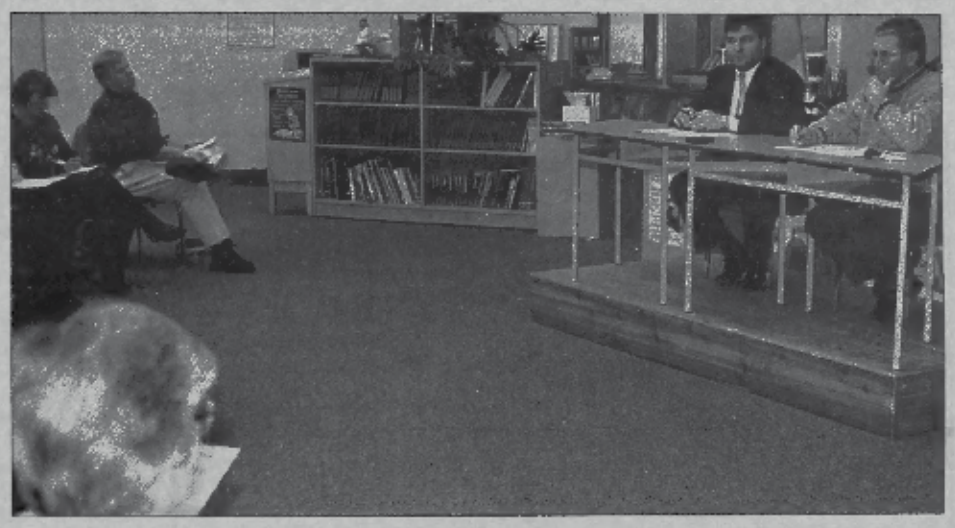
Approximately 25 people were present for the meeting, and came prepared with a list of questions, aimed at resolving key aspects of the amalgamation of school boards and the shifting of education finance to the provincial purview.

Hodgson, however, had few answers for them. In symphony with his cabinet colleagues' statements of the past few weeks, he responded to most inquiries that he did not know, that much of the information they were requesting hadn't been determined, but that he would to take those questions to the consulting committees, and to Minister of Education John Snobelen.

Hodgson took the opportunity to defend the government against charges that it is moving too fast, and failing to consult, and made a statements emphasizing the government's belief in the need for drastic change.

"I don't have all the answers at this time, but I'll be happy to tell you what I do know. I can tell you that the roles of school councils will be the same or enhanced under Bill 104... Tell me what you think your role should be."

Council members had varying reactions. Some seemed to be feeling some of the frustration the province's transfer partners have been expressing in the atmosphere of confusion that has followed the province's mid-January blitz of restructuring legislation. They didn't seem too happy to be told, again, that most of the answers aren't there yet, and that the government couldn't say for sure in some cases when they might be. Hodgson did say much of the clear legal powers of councils should be spelled out in legislation within a few months.



Archie Stouffer Elementary School principal Peter Forgrave, right, was the host as Victoria-Haliburton MPP Chris Hodgson answered questions posed by members of the newly appointed school councils from throughout the county.

Hodgson also defended the government's decision to announce as much as it has without having more of the specific details of implementation in place. Said Hodgson, "It's a Catch-22. If we'd come out with everything decided, people would have said we weren't being democratic... We've consulted, and we will be consulting through the year. We want to hear from you."

Though some councillors were sympathetic, many also expressed reservations about the speed of the government's action -- and some concern for the impending amalgamation of the board. Said one woman, "We had a good board. You're taking that away."

Said Jane Johnston, a Haliburton parent who has been involved in education issues since the controversy over the proposed closure of Victoria Street school, "I've had the opportunity to speak to the board a number of times over the past year, and they've listened. I'm not sure I believe I'm still going to have that opportunity in the future."

Square pegs, round holes

School councils occupy an odd position in the restructur-

(more on page 4)

Official comment yet to come

Minden councillors cool on Barber report

Anson, Hindon and Minden councillor Daryl Moore is not convinced that the findings of the Barber Report, which claim Haliburton County municipalities can save $1.25-million, is accurate.

Discounting the $600,000 the report says can be saved by transferring winter maintenance of county roads to the municipalities, Moore says the savings amount to an average of about $10,000 per municipality.

"He has shown us very little savings," Moore said.

Councillor Sinc Nesbitt agreed. He said that the benchmark that has been set for the winter road maintenance, is based on the unit costs in townships have the fewest miles of roads to plow.

Moore added that the figures from 1995 were used for the analysis and that the 1996 figures will show savings over the previous year.

"The report is redundant, in my opinion," Moore said.

Moore was also concerned that the report was biased in favour of keeping the 10 municipal and county governments intact. He's not convinced that there would be no savings in going to a one-tier system. That option was not considered when the report was being compiled.

The Minden council will be reviewing the report in detail and a statement regarding Anson, Hindon and Minden's evaluation of the report is expected.

Responding to reeve Jeanne Anthon's statement that what was reported in the papers was accurate, Moore said that it is up to council to issue a statement outlining the municipality's opinion regarding the report.

Moore said it is unfortunate that the report received the publicity it has before the municipalities have had the opportunity to analyze the information.

Bank tenders virtually identical

Anson, Hindon and Minden council asked the two banks in the village to submit tenders for the banking services the municipality requires. The municipality was hoping to get the best value for its banking dollars.

Both the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, which has been providing the municipality's banking for many years, and the Toronto Dominion Bank, responded with proposals. After reviewing both tenders, council found the cost of services offered were virtually identical.

Council saw no advantage in switching from the CIBC to the TD, so CIBC will continue to be the municipality's banking service provider.

AH&M supports HCSA bridge proposal

Anson, Hindon and Minden council has offered moral support, if not finan-

(more on page 5)

Police issue warning on tainted drugs

The OPP is investigating incidents which may have involved narcotics laced with a dangerous poison.

Details are sketchy all around though the substance is known to have resulted in two people being taken to hospital in Minden. The high school was asked to announce a warning over the public address system, but a spokesman could not say what narcotics were involved.

The OPP says two youths from the Haliburton-Minden area were hospitalized following the use of what the force release called 'an unknown narcotic'. The force says they believe the drug originated in the Haliburton-Minden area.

Police say they are still investigating the incidents, and are waiting for lab results on the substance.

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